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♦THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT.♦

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WITH this number THE STUDENT closes its sixth volume. A glance at the contents of this volume shows at least two things:—

(1) It is possible to present the leading subjects of Old Testament study in a form which is at once scholarly yet popular. In certain lines of investigation, where the linguistic element abounds, the more learned style is necessary. But in general, there is no occasion for the employment of the affected style which characterizes much of our "learned" work. A plain straightforward presentation of a subject is entirely consistent with a deep and exhaustive knowledge of that subject. If scholars could but be brought to recognize this fact, how much more wide-reaching the results of their work would be.

(2) It is possible for men who are not specialists to keep abreast of the results accomplished in a given department with the expenditure of a comparatively small amount of time and energy. The great cry, in these days, is for more time; and certainly, in view of the pressure which rests upon us, more time is needed. But the fact is, a judicious use is not always made of the time we have. Men think, and plan, and consider, but do not *act*. The Old Testament subjects about which so much is written, for example, are thought to be too deep, too exacting, for anyone but a specialist to take up. It is true that a certain portion of the work must be done by specialists; but when the results of this work have been put into shape, there is no reason why men who are not specialists should hesitate to enter upon an investigation of them. The work, if but once begun, will be found to be most helpful and stimulating. There is, however, aside from this, a general knowledge of the Old Testament department which every conscientious Bible-student should make an effort to maintain. For such especially THE STUDENT is intended. May the number desiring such help become greater; may the help afforded by THE STUDENT become more valuable.

THE work of Professor Beecher on the Sunday-school lessons during the past year has deservedly attracted much attention. The material has differed essentially, both in plan and execution, from any other. Its striking characteristic has been the rigid application of "common-sense" principles of interpretation. It is not strange that we should bring with us from our childhood a multitude of "childish" ideas about the Bible. And not only we, but our ancestors for many generations, have done this thing. The result is a multitude of misconceptions, of which skeptics naturally, and in some cases most justly, make much capital. With a reverent spirit, and from a conservative point of view, Professor Beecher has endeavored, in the small space at his disposal, to call attention to some of these weak positions. He has, from time to time, pointed out the utter absurdity of some of our most cherished ideas. In this effort to introduce the principle of common sense, to lead us to look at Bible-history from a rational stand-point, he has performed an invaluable service. Destructive critics would take away Bible-history; most conservative critics would treat it as a piece of costly furniture to be handled with gloves, or as an idol to be worshiped. Professor Beecher would treat it as a book describing ordinary life under extraordinary guidance; he would so interpret it as to make it seem to be, what it really is, a sensible book;—a method of interpretation which, when put into general practice, will deliver us, on the one hand, from the blasphemous attacks of unregenerate critics, and on the other hand, from the equally injurious upbolstering of ignorant and fanciful apologists.

TOO much must not be expected of American students. Neither the professors nor the clergy of this country are as favorably situated for carrying on original investigations as are those of England or Germany. It is, however, with some feeling of pride that one reads the list of books and articles in the line of exploration which Professor Mitchell gives us in this number of *THE STUDENT*. After all, much has been done. The names of Robinson, Merrill, Trumbull, Ward, and many others, will long be remembered in connection with the work which they have accomplished in this direction. The bibliography of this subject will serve, not only as a convenient reference for students, but also as a stimulus to still greater activity. It is an occasion for regret that the means are not at hand with which to push this work. We need not fear that too much will be done. There is rather a danger that, in our practical and busy life, we shall overlook a work which deals only with the past, and in which a few only, at best, can be actively engaged.

STUDENTS of the Bible will await with much interest Captain Conder's vindication, in view of the charges of ignorance and misrepresentation made by Professor W. Robertson Smith. The sympathies of conservative thinkers are, of course, with Captain Conder. It is interesting to note that the same instrument wielded by Captain Conder has been turned against him. Evidently some one is at fault. But the question is reduced, in the case of their mutual charges, to one of *facts*. (1) Has Conder, in his statement of the results of monumental study, stated facts? (2) Has Wellhausen ignored these facts or shown himself ignorant of their existence? All will agree with Conder in the statement that, "among the chief requisites for a thorough understanding of the Bible, it is important that the critic, in addition to linguistic and literary knowledge, should possess a deep acquaintance with Eastern antiquities and a sympathetic appreciation of Eastern manners and thought." It remains for those versed in these matters to determine who is in the right. The decision will be awaited with much interest.

CONNECTED with this question, another, of peculiar importance from the biblical stand-point, has arisen. For nineteen years much has been made of the Moabite Stone, discovered not far from the Arnon, and claiming to be the epigraph of King Mesha, and to date from about 900 B. C. Only recently there has appeared a critically restored edition of the text, with full notes, by Professors Smend and Socin. But in the *Scottish Review* of April, Rev. A. Loewy, Sec'y to the Anglo-Jewish Association, endeavors to show that the stone, "notwithstanding its world-wide glorification, is nothing but 'a stone of stumbling,' and must be consigned to the limbo of marvelous impositions." A fuller statement will be found elsewhere. A few scholars have held this position from the beginning; but its acceptance as genuine was as universal as is ever expected in such cases. If now it proves to be a fabrication of modern times, the feeling of doubt in the results of modern researches, already considerable in some quarters, will be strengthened. It will, nevertheless, teach the necessity of being on our guard against impositions, of accepting cautiously the claims of specialists in whatever field they may be made, and of drawing our conclusions from their claims with even greater caution. It is altogether probable that Dr. Loewy is mistaken. It will require strong evidence to show that a stone which has been tested with such care and by such experts, is a fraud.

THE article on "Israelitish Politics as affected by Assyrian, Babylonian and Early Achæmenian Kings," by Professor Lyon, will

be read with interest by our readers, although most of them, doubtless, will differ with the author in his conception of the prophet's work. In the past, writers on prophecy have emphasized the divine element in prophecy, and in so doing have almost obliterated the distinction which exists between prediction and prophecy. In other words, the human side of the question has been overlooked. For our own part, we feel the importance of placing an increased emphasis, if that is possible, upon the divine character of this most wonderful phenomenon. The deep and broad study of the subject should most certainly lead to a more decided feeling of its supernatural character. On the other hand, we must not make the mistake of supposing that the prophets were men of another world. They were Israelites, imbued with the religious and political feelings of the men of their time. They were working, as best they could, for the elevation of their fellow-men. They were the moral reformers and, in many cases, the prime-ministers of their day. From this stand-point much light is shed upon their work by a study of the history of the nations with which they came into contact, and by the study of their own history from the political point of view. The article referred to is full of suggestive material. We trust it may have a careful perusal.

A DETERMINED effort is being made looking toward a "proposed school of Biblical Archæology and Philology in the East." The names of the gentlemen who have undertaken the movement furnish a sufficient guarantee not only of its worthiness, but also of its probable success. This school will furnish "a center for instruction and assistance to recent graduates of theological seminaries who wish to pursue special branches; to ministers able to secure a few months vacation; to scholars who have time for more careful and extended investigation; to young men preparing to fill chairs of oriental languages or to become professors in theological institutions; to travelers anxious to do something more than merely make a hurried tour through the Holy Land; to expeditions sent out to undertake explorations in Syria or the adjacent countries; and to all who, in any way, are attempting to gather from the land material for the clearer illustration of the Book." Can there be a doubt as to the gratifying results of an outlay in establishing such a school? We trust that the appeal for funds will receive a prompt and hearty response; and that this new enterprise, full of so much promise, shall soon be thoroughly established. Communications may be addressed to Rev. D. Stuart Dodge, 11 Cliff Street, New York.